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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈہ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Received threat calls, asked police to find culprits: CM

MANDYA, 2 MAY

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said he has received threat calls, and has asked the police to find out those behind it "I too get threat calls, what to do? We have informed the police. We have asked the police to find those making threat calls and take action against them," Siddaramaiah told reporters here while responding to a question about Speaker UT Khader allegedly getting a threat call.—*Salar News*

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Patil accepts Yatnal's challenge, tries to resign

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

Karnataka Minister Shivanand Patil on Friday submitted his resignation as MLA from Basavana Bagevadi segment to Legislative Assembly Speaker UT Khader. He said he was resigning after accepting the challenge thrown at him by Vijayapura City MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal to contest against him electorally. However, Karnataka Legislative Assembly Speaker UT Khader on Friday said Patil's "conditional resignation" as MLA cannot be accepted as per rules. Patil, who holds Textiles, Sugarcane Development and Agricultural Marketing portfolios, had requested the Speaker to accept his resignation, only if Yatnal too quits and his resignation is accepted. Patil noted that Yatnal had challenged him,. —*PTI*

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Modi inaugurates Vizhinjam Seaport in Kerala

T'PURAM, 2 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially commissioned the Vizhinjam International Seaport on Friday in the presence of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, whose presence at the inauguration, Modi said, will give "sleepless nights" to many. The seaport was constructed for Rs 8,800 crore. "It is designed to accommodate large cargo ships, addressing a critical need. Until now, 75 per cent of India's transshipment activities were conducted at foreign ports, resulting in significant revenue losses for the country. However, this is poised to change. The funds will now be channeled into domestic development, creating new economic opportunities," he said. —*PTI*

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One killed in Bengaluru ambulance crash

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

A 49-year-old man died and six others were injured after a speeding ambulance allegedly collided with several vehicles in Wilson Garden, police said on Friday. The deceased was Ramesh, a pushcart vendor, they said. The accident occurred on Thursday around 8.30am in the BTS road area under Wilson Garden police station limits. According to the police, the Sanjeevani ambulance collided with two pushcarts, an auto-rickshaw, a scooter and knocked down a pedestrian. Following the incident, locals caught the driver, Chiranjeev, and thrashed him before he was handed over to the police. —*PTI*

National Independent Investigation Commission head ALM Fazlur Rahman with Chief Adviser of Bangladesh's interim government Muhammad Yunus **PHOTO: X/@CHIEFADVISERGOB**

'If India attacks Pak, B'desh will hit NE'

Dakha shies away from Yunus' aide's comment

DHAKA/NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

- Former major general ALM Fazlur Rahman said the Bangladeshi interim government should begin discussing joint military arrangements with China

A former Bangladesh army officer and close aide of Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus suggested that Dhaka should collaborate with China to occupy India's Northeastern states if it attacks Pakistan.

Yunus' interim government on Friday distanced itself from the remarks made by major general (Retd) ALM Fazlur Rahman on his social media account.

In a Facebook post on Tuesday, Rahman wrote in Bengali, "If India attacks Pakistan, Bangladesh should occupy the seven states of Northeastern India."

"I think it is necessary to start discussions with China on a joint military arrangement in this regard," he added.

Rahman was appointed by the Yunus-led interim government in December 2024 as the chairman of the National Independent Commission. He was to investigate the killings in the Bangladesh Rifles revolt of 2009.

Distancing itself from the former army officer's remarks, Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a media release on Friday said, "The comments do not reflect the position or policies of the government of Bangladesh, and as such, the government neither endorses nor supports such rhetoric in any form or manner."

The government urged all concerned to refrain from associating the state with the personal views expressed by Rahman, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

Bangladesh remains firmly committed to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual respect, and the peaceful coexistence of all nations, the ministry said.

Earlier in March, Chief Adviser Yunus, during his visit to China, had remarked that India's seven northeastern states, which share a nearly 1,600-km border with Bangladesh, are landlocked and have no way to reach the ocean except through his country.

In his address at a business event, Yunus said Dhaka was the "only guardian" of the Indian Ocean in the region, as he invited Beijing to send goods through Bangladesh across the world. —*PTI*

2 attacked in tense Mangaluru; police probe communal link

MANGALURU, 2 MAY

Two men were attacked in separate incidents in and around Mangaluru city on Friday, raising concerns about escalating communal tensions in coastal Karnataka.

Police are investigating possible links between these attacks and recent incidents in Dakshina Kannada district.

According to the police, CCTV footage has been secured in connection with the attack at Kuntikan and investigation is on.

In the first incident, unidentified assailants in a car attempted to attack Luqman, a resident of Ullal involved in the fish trade, near Kuntikan locality.

According to eyewitnesses, a woman passerby raised an alarm, forcing the attackers to flee the scene. Lukman was taken to the hospital for treatment.

In a separate incident in Kannur, on the outskirts of Mangaluru city, three unidentified individuals assaulted another youth, Naushad, while he was reportedly on his way to the market. He has been admitted to a private hospital and is undergoing treatment.

These incidents come amid heightened communal tensions in coastal Karnataka following the brutal murder of Suhas Shetty, a Hindu activist here on 1 May .

Police meanwhile booked three people for allegedly circulating fake and inflammatory content on social media in connection with the Shetty's death. —*PTI*

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K'taka beer drinkers face another price jolt

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

After the recent price rise in electricity, milk and diesel, the Karnataka government's proposed hike in beer prices—its third in just two years—has sparked outrage among consumers.

According to a draft notification issued by the State Excise Department, the government intends to raise the Additional Excise Duty (AED) on beer by 10 per cent which could increase beer prices by Rs 10 to Rs 20 per bottle. Lower-end and local brands prices could increase by Rs 5, while premium brews are expected to become dearer by Rs 15.

"This is daylight robbery disguised as taxation," said Abhinav Rao, a 32-year-old techie from Indiranagar. "It feels like the State is trying to balance its budget on our weekends." —*Salar News*

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VIA WAGAH BORDER

Pak lets stranded citizens in India to return

ISLAMABAD, 2 MAY

Pakistan on Friday announced that it would continue to allow the use of the Wagah border crossing for its citizens stranded in India, following New Delhi's decision to revoke visas in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror incident.

The Attari-Wagah border, located near Amritsar in India and Lahore in Pakistan, was shut on Thursday after being kept open till 30 April.

At least 21 Pakistani nationals crossed the border. They had been camping on the roads outside the Integrated Check Post.

About 50 more Pakistani nationals are queuing outside the Integrated Check Post and may be allowed to cross over into Pakistan after due clearance of customs and immigration authorities.

Pakistan's Foreign Office criticised India's decision to revoke the visas of Pakistani citizens.

"The Indian decision is creating serious humanitarian challenges," it said, citing disruptions to medical treatments and family separations.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday urged "brotherly" countries, including Saudi Arabia, to impress upon India to de-escalate and defuse tensions. Sharif separately met Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliky, UAE Ambassador Hamad Obaid Al-Zaabi and Kuwait Ambassador Nasser Abdulrahman Jasser in Islamabad

Meanwhile, Pakistan is planning to issue a formal diplomatic notice to India against its unilateral move to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty, reported the Express News.

On the other hand, India will be asking global multilateral agencies, including the IMF, to relook at funds and loans provided to Pakistan. The IMF Executive Board is scheduled to meet Pakistan officials on 9 May. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

BSF personnel keep a watch as Pakistani nationals walk towards the Attari-Wagah border to cross over to their country, in Amritsar district, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

SC protects family from deportation

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The Supreme Court intervened to prevent the deportation of a six-member family to Pakistan, ordering authorities to verify their citizenship claims before taking any action. This decision follows the family's detention amidst allegations of visa overstay.

A bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh urged the verification of identity documents—such as passports and Aadhaar cards—before any coercive measures.

"The authorities may not take coercive action until a decision is made, and the petitioners can approach the Kashmir High Court if dissatisfied," the bench said.

Counsel for the family, Nanda Kishore, asserted that they possessed valid Indian documents and were taken to the Wagah border for deportation. He said the family members in Srinagar were bundled into a jeep and ferried the Wagah border and now were at the "threshold of being thrown out of the country".

A woman holding her Indian passport and her child's Pakistani passport **PHOTO: PTI**

- The Supreme Court said authorities may not take coercive action until a decision is made, and the 6-member family can approach the Kashmir High Court if dissatisfied

In a separate matter, the Supreme Court granted the Jammu and Kashmir government additional time to report on the status of Pakistani nationals detained under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978, after data was reportedly lost in recent floods. This request was made in light of concerns regarding the treatment of Pakistani nationals who complete their sentences in India but cannot be repatriated. —*PTI*

Jahnavi SN with her Vijaya Bharathi School teachers after scoring a perfect 625/625 on Friday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

GIRLS OUTSHINE BOYS

7 Bengaluru students among SSLC toppers

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

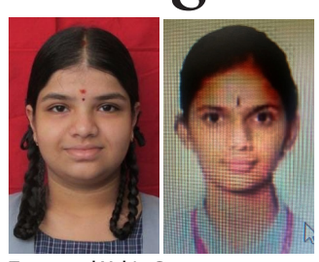
The Karnataka SSLC (Class 10) results for the academic year 2024–25 were announced on Friday, with an overall pass percentage of 62.34 per cent. Girls have outperformed boys once again, while urban students have outshone their rural counterparts. 22 students scored the full 625/625 marks.

Announcing the results, School Education and Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa said a total of 8.42 lakh students appeared for the SSLC-1 exam, with 5.24 lakh clearing it. Among freshers, the pass percentage stood at 66.14 per cent.

In Bengaluru, several students celebrated stellar results. Jahnavi SN, a resident of Girinagar and a student of Vijaya Bharathi School, scored a perfect 625 out of 625 marks. Speaking to Salar News, she said, "It is like a dream come true. My teachers and parents were very supportive and had a lot of expectations from me. I was a bit nervous because of that, but they always stood by me. I want to become a scientist and plan to take the PCMB combination."

Another topper, Yukta S from Holy Child English School, credited her success to discipline. "I had been studying for over six hours a day. I want to pursue science in college," she said. Other toppers from the city include C Bhavana, Ranjitha AC, Dhanalakshmi M, Madhusudhan Raju S and Namitha.

Among districts, Dakshina Kannada topped the state with 91.12 per cent, followed by Udupi (89.96 per cent) and Uttara Kannada (83.19 per cent). Bengaluru Rural posted a commendable 74.02 per cent, while Bengaluru South and North recorded 72.30 per cent and 72.27 per cent respectively. Mysuru managed 68.39 per cent, falling from the seventh position it secured last year to the 15th. Kalaburagi, at the bottom of the list, posted a dismal 42.43 per cent.



Tanya and Yukta S **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Tanya of Mysuru Bharathiya Vidyamandir and Dhanush from Marimallappa High School were among the 22 students who secured 625/625 in the state, said DDPI ST Javaregowda.

Girls clearly led the charge, with a 74 per cent pass rate compared to 58.07 per cent for boys. Urban areas recorded a 67.05 per cent pass rate, slightly ahead of rural regions at 65.47 per cent.

Minister Bangarappa noted a major improvement from last year's pass percentage of 53 per cent, attributing it to webcasting in exam centres, appointment of 13,000 guest teachers, and special classes in government schools.

—*Salar News*

Cops continue hunt for Marathahalli molester

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

Three police teams have been formed in the City to trace the man accused of molesting a 26-year-old woman near Eco World tech park in Marathahalli. As per the complainant, she was out for a walk at around 11.40pm on 30 April, when accused approached her from behind and inappropriately touched her while speeding past on his bike. He then took a U-turn, returned, and assaulted her a second time before halting at a short distance and staring at her before fleeing the scene. In the CCTV footage retrieved by the police, the accused is seen wearing a purple T-shirt and riding a two-wheeler. The victim managed to partially note down the vehicle number and police have expanded their investigation to nab the offender. The Marathahalli police registered a case under sections 74 (offence of assault on a woman) and 78 (stalking) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023 against the accused. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Traffic restrictions in City for IPL match on Saturday

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

The City Traffic Police (BTP) have announced traffic and parking restrictions in the central parts of the City ahead of the IPL match at M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Saturday between 3pm and 11pm. Traffic movement will be restricted on several major roads, including Queens Road, MG Road, Cubbon Road, St Marks Road, Kasturba Road, and Vittal Mallya Road. Vehicle entry to Cubbon Park and nearby stretches such as Kings Road and Bal Bhavan Road will be prohibited during the match. The parking spots for the public are at St Joseph's Indian School Ground, UB City, and the BMTC Depot in Shivajinagar. —*Salar News*

10 PHCs in State solarised under CSR initiative

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

Ten Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in State are solarised under the flagship corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative "Swasthya Kiran", of Signify, formerly Philips. Under the initiative, each PHC has been equipped with a 5 kWp solar panel, a 19.2 kWh battery, and a 6 kVA solar PCU. Signify collaborated with a SELCO Foundation, the inauguration ceremony was held on Friday in Tumakuru, which has the maximum number of PHCs solarised, in the presence of Mohandas, TB Officer, District Health Office, Tumakuru, and Sidheshwara, Taluk Health Officer, Sira Block. Swasthya Kiran project covers PHCs in Tumakuru, three in Begaluru Urban, one in Kolar, and two in Mysuru. —*PTI*

Prohibitory order in M'luru after murder

The clampdown follows the murder of Suhas Shetty, a known rowdy sheeter and Hindutva activist

MANGALURU, 2 MAY

The Mangaluru Police have enforced prohibitory order across the city from Friday to 6 May amid escalating tension following the murder of a Hindutva activist.

The clampdown follows the murder of Suhas Shetty, a known rowdy sheeter and Hindutva activist, who was murdered by an unidentified group late Thursday evening within the Bajpe police station limits in Mangaluru City.

Following the incident, police enforced prohibitory order under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita across the Mangaluru City Police limits.

The order pronounced by City Police Commissioner, Anupam Agarwal, who also serves as the additional district magistrate, prohibits public gatherings, meetings, processions, sloganeering, and the carrying of objects that could be used as weapons.

Barring a few incidents like stone pelting, the Dakshina Kannada district bandh called by Hindu outfits over the murder of Bajrang Dal activist Shetty was total and peaceful. All the commercial and educational institutions were closed, while banking sector functioned as usual.

The order aims to prevent potential flare-ups and maintain public order after the incident.

Police personnel stand guard while former Bajrang Dal member Suhas Shetty's mortal remains were being taken to his native place, in Mangaluru, Karnataka, on Friday

PHOTO: PTI

Shetty, who was in his early thirties, was reportedly associated with various local Hindutva outfits and had several cases registered against him, including for assault and unlawful assembly.

Police have got information about the culprits, Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Hithendra R said. "We have got to know about the culprits, their names and other details... If you see Mangaluru's history, none of this comes across as unnatural, and police will mercilessly take action."

Family of deceased said that last rites will be conducted in Bantwal after postmortem.

Bajrang Dal activist Shetty and four others were travelling in a fish-laden truck when they were stopped by a gang in the car and on a bike. They dragged Suhas out and attacked him with swords near Bajape Kinnipadavu on Thursday night.

Police suspected that Suhas's murder might be a revenge for the murder of Fazil of Suratkal, who was murdered by a gang just two days after Praveen Nettaru was murdered on 28 July in 2022. Fazil's murder is also said to be a revenge for murder of Nettaru, who was also an office bearer of BJP youth block.

—*Salar News with Agencies*

CM vows action; BJP calls State 'mini Pak'

MANDYA, 2 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that police have been told to find out the culprits involved in the murder of rowdy-sheeter Suhas Shetty in Mangaluru.

Stating that he is yet to know the reason for the killing, Siddaramaiah said, "He (Shetty) was said to be a rowdy sheeter. It needs to be checked. After the murder, I spoke to the police yesterday, and we have sent ADGP (Law and Order) to Mangaluru."

"Whether it is preplanned or not is yet to be known. Once the investigation is complete, it will be known. BJP always keeps looking for such incidents to play politics over it," he said.

BJP flays poor 'law and order'.

BJP State President BY Vijayendra on Friday hit out at the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government in the State over the murder of a Hindu activist and alleged that the incident occurred in full public view is a "chilling reflection" of the "alarming breakdown" of law and order.

Taking to 'X', the State BJP chief called it the "Wazar-e-Ala government".

It also highlights how emboldened radical elements are, targeting Hindu Karyakarthas without fear of consequences, he alleged.

Leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly R Ashoka demanded the resignation of Home Minister G Parameshwara for the "failing" law and order.

—*PTI*

Minister Patil accepts Yatnal's dare, quits as MLA

Minister Shivanand Patil submitted his resignation to Karnataka Assembly Speaker UT Khader on Friday

PHOTO: SALAR

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

State Legislative Assembly Speaker UT Khader on Friday said Minister Shivanand Patil's "conditional resignation" as MLA cannot be accepted as per rules.

This decision from the Speaker came hours after Patil met him and submitted his resignation as MLA from Basavana Bagevadi segment, stating that he was doing so, accepting the challenge thrown at him by Vijayapura City MLA, Basangouda Patil Yatnal to contest against him electorally.

Patil, who holds Textiles, Sugarcane Development and Agricultural Marketing portfolios, has, however, requested the Speaker to accept his resignation, only if Yatnal too quits and his resignation is accepted.

Patil said Yatnal had challenged him, stating that he would resign as MLA from his Vijayapura City assembly constituency and would contest against him from his Basavana Bagevadi segment.

Yatnal had won from Vijayapura in 2023 Assembly polls as a BJP candidate. He was recently expelled by BJP from the primary membership of the party for six years, for repeated violations of the party discipline.

Khader said Patil's resignation will be examined, and a decision will be taken in accordance with the Constitution and rules.

Responding to a question about format of resignation, the Speaker said, "It is not as per rules and hence cannot be accepted." Patil told reporters Yatnal had set Friday deadline for him to resign.

"I have no pain about losing a minister post. When I quit as MLA, naturally I will have to quit as minister too," he added.

Patil also hit out at Yatnal for commenting that his family's original surname was "Hachadad" and not Patil, and for making personal remarks against him. —*PTI*

THUNDERSTRUCK

A lightning bolt is seen above Masjid e Khadria on Friday, as Bengaluru experiences thunder showers

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Dacoity case cracked in Bidar, cops nab three

BIDAR, 2 MAY

With the arrest of three criminals, two hailing from Maharashtra, Bidar police on Friday solved a case of robbery in Old Adarsh Colony of the City. The trio had looted gold and cash worth approximately Rs 15.55 lakh.

On 26 April, around dawn, five masked robbers broke into the house of Jyothilatha Santosh Kumar, a superintendent at the DC office. They threatened Jyothilatha, her mother and son with knives and an air gun before looting the valuables.

The criminals also locked the family in the bathroom and warned them not to inform the police before leaving. Police identified the accused as Kartar Singh from Parali in Beed district of Maharashtra, his brother and Bidar resident Jagjeet Singh and Akshay from Pune.

Police with a man who helped the trio sell the stolen gold

PHOTO: SALAR

Police have also taken into custody a person who helped the trio sell the stolen gold.

Acting on a tip-off, a special investigation team comprising officers from Gandhi Ganj and Bidar Rural Police stations tracked the criminals.

During the operation, Kartar Singh was shot in the right leg by the police, while Head Constable Maqsood was stabbed in his shoulder by one of the accused.

Both of them have been admitted to BRIMS Hospital for treatment. —*Salar News*

CM urges PM to remove 50% reservation cap

MANDYA, 2 MAY

State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to remove the 50 per cent ceiling on reservation by bringing in amendments to the constitution, and to take steps towards ensuring quota in the private sector.

He also asked the Central government to fix a time frame for the caste enumeration in the next census, which has been announced by the Central government.

"What we are saying is there should be soci-economic and education survey; and the 50 percent ceiling for reservation has to be removed by bringing an amendment to the constitution, because the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case has said that reservation should not exceed 50 per cent," Siddaramaiah said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, if reservation is at 50 per cent, it won't be possible to give reservation according to population for those who are backwards socially, economically and educationally.

In a major decision, the union government on Wednesday decided to include caste enumeration in the forthcoming census exercise in a "transparent" manner. —*PTI*

THIRD HIKE IN TWO YEARS

Beer gets pricier; guzzlers call it 'leisure tax'

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

After the recent price rise in electricity, milk and diesel, the Karnataka government's proposed hike in beer prices—its third in just two years—has sparked outrage among consumers within the brewing industry.

According to a draft notification issued by the State Excise Department, the government intends to raise the Additional Excise Duty (AED) on beer by 10 per cent which could increase beer prices by Rs 10 to Rs 20 per bottle. Lower-end and local brands prices could increase by Rs 5, while premium brews are expected to become dearer by Rs 15.

"This is daylight robbery disguised as taxation," said Abhinav Rao, a 32-year-old techie from Indiranagar. "It feels like the State is trying to balance its budget on our weekends."

The proposal, which allows for a 7-day window for public objections, comes on the back of a long-term plan to rake in Rs 40,000 crore in revenue from alcohol sales alone in this fiscal. Beer, despite comprising just 8 per cent of liquor sales by volume, contributes a whopping 16 per cent to the state's excise revenues.

"It's a tax on leisure," said Ramesh Mehta, a small business owner in Jayanagar. "We're paying the price for the state's economic mismanagement. Beer is already a luxury for many; now it will become unaffordable."

Retailers are also unimpressed. "Sales have already dipped since the last two price hikes," said Murali Hegde, a

PHOTO: FREEPIK

beer shop owner in Rajajinagar. Echoing similar concerns, Seema K, a liquor store supervisor in Koramangala, noted, "We get the same complaints every time—'why is beer more expensive again?' People are simply buying less or shifting to stronger spirits."

The Brewers' Association of India (BAI) has formally protested the hike in a letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, calling it "unprecedented" and warning that the state's 11 breweries—employing nearly 7,000 people—could soon become financially unviable. BAI Director-General Vinod Giri said the AED on beer has jumped from 175 per cent in 2023 to a staggering 205 per cent now.

With simmering discontent of beer lovers and mounting opposition from industry, it remains to be seen if the government will plough ahead with this move. —*Salar News*

2 DC offices in K'taka get bomb threats

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

Extensive search operations were carried out at the offices of Chamarajanagara and Raichur Deputy Commissioners in Karnataka on Friday following bomb threats received via email Friday morning, police said.

Nothing suspicious was found on the premises of the two offices and they turned out to be a "hoax" email threat, they said.

The subject of the email received at one of the DC offices read: "Pahalgam: RDX based IEDs placed in Karnataka Raichur DEO building, Evacuate Officers/Staff by 3PM."

"We received a call at around 10.30 am about a bomb threat email sent to the DC office of Chamarajanagara stating that they will blow up the DC office," a senior police officer said.

- The subject of the email received at one of the DC offices read: "Pahalgam: RDX based IEDs placed in Karnataka Raichur DEO building, Evacuate Officers/Staff by 3PM."

Following the incident, the officials and public in the offices of the respective Deputy Commissioners were evacuated safely and a thorough search operation was carried out by the police and the bomb disposal squads.

"Based on the complaint of a DC office personnel, we have registered a case in this regard," the officer said. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

Air marshal N Tiwari becomes IAF Vice Chief

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Air Marshal Narmdeshwar Tiwari assumed charge as the new Vice Chief of the Air Staff on Friday, succeeding Air Marshal SP Dharkar, who retired on 30 April. He earlier served as the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the South Western Air Command in Gandhinagar. Commissioned into the fighter stream in June 1986, he is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and was awarded the President's Gold Medal. A flying instructor and experimental test pilot, he has flown various aircraft and played a key role in operational testing, particularly on the Mirage-2000. He was part of significant missions during the Kargil conflict. —*PTI*

Pakistan flag painted on Goa roads, case filed

PANAJI, 2 MAY

A complaint has been lodged by a group of citizens, led by Goa Legislative Assembly Speaker Ramesh Tawadkar, after the flag of Pakistan was discovered painted on roads in three locations in Canacona town. Tawadkar, who also represents the area as an MLA, highlighted the incident in his complaint, expressing that the act appeared intended to insult the national flag. Both BJP and Congress leaders have condemned the incident, with Congress leader Sunil Kawthankar calling for immediate action and stating that Pakistan's flag should not be displayed on Indian property, but rather burned instead. He added that if the act was a protest in response to the recent Pahalgam terror attack, it should have been conducted openly rather than under the cover of night. The complaint urges authorities to investigate the matter according to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. —*PTI*

56% turnout in Assam panchayat elections

GUWAHATI, 2 MAY

Around 56.41 per cent of voters had cast their ballots by 3.30pm in the first phase of Assam's panchayat polls on Friday. Voting began at 7.30am and continues until 4.30pm across 14 districts. Over 89.59 lakh people are eligible to vote at 12,916 booths. Incidents of violence disrupted polling briefly in Cachar district, where a clash over alleged proxy voting left two injured. Congress candidate Kuber Yadav was also attacked at another booth. Security was reinforced, and polling resumed. This is the first local election after constituency delimitation. The NDA has already secured 348 seats unopposed. Phase two will be held on 7 May, with vote counting scheduled for 11 May. Chief Minister Sarma urged voters to strengthen grassroots democracy. —*PTI*

Congress presses PM on Andhra special status

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Amravati, the Congress took a swipe at him over the unfulfilled promise of Special Category Status for Andhra Pradesh. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh questioned whether Modi would finally deliver on the commitment he made in Tirupati in 2014. Ramesh also pointed to other pending promises under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, including the Kadapa Steel Plant, Duggirajupatnam Port, Kakinada Petrochemical Complex, and an Agricultural University. Ramesh said that while Modi recently accepted the Congress's demand for a caste census, he should also honour previous commitments to the state.—*PTI*

US hopes Pak will cooperate with India

JD Vance is 'worried about conflict between nuclear powers'; UNSC to hold meeting soon

NEW YORK/UNITED NATIONS/LONDON, 2 MAY

US Vice President JD Vance has said that US hopes that India will respond to the Pahalgam terrorist attack in a way that does not lead to a "broader regional conflict" and expects Pakistan to "cooperate" with New Delhi to "hunt down" militants sometimes operating from their soil.

In an interview with Fox News, 'Special Report', Vance was responding to a question on whether he was worried about simmering tensions between the two nuclear powers. "Our hope here is that India responds to this terrorist attack in a way that doesn't lead to a broader regional conflict," Vance said in the interview, adding that the US was in close contact with both India and Pakistan.

After being asked if he's worried about potential conflict, Vance replied. "Well, sure, I'm worried about any time you see a hot spot breaking out, especially between two nuclear powers."

"And we hope, frankly, that Pakistan, to the extent that they're responsible, cooperates with India to make sure that the terrorists sometimes operating in their territory are hunted down and dealt with. That's how we hope this unfolds, we're obviously in close contact. We'll see what happens," Vance said.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council may meet "sooner rather than later" to discuss the situation between India and Pakistan UNSC President said.

"If a request comes for a meeting, then... I think this meeting should take place because, as we said, maybe it's also an opportunity to have views expressed and this might help to diffuse a bit tensions," Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of May, Ambassador Evangelos Sekeris said.

Similarly, the UK has called on all parties involved to take a measured approach and urged de-escalation.

"We encourage all parties to take a measured approach," Lord Ray Collins, a minister in the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), stated on behalf of the government. "We are urging all international organisations to urge de-escalation and proper engagement." —*PTI*

Vice President JD Vance said that he hopes Pakistan hunts down the terrorists in their territory **PHOTO: PTI**

- US Vice President JD Vance said that he hopes India pursues the terrorists in such a way that it doesn't destabalise peace in the region. Similarly, the UK called on parties to take a measured approach to ensure de-escalation

Ceasefire violations continue for 8th night

JAMMU/SRINAGAR, 2 MAY

Pakistani troops resorted to unprovoked firing along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) in five districts of Jammu and Kashmir, prompting retaliation from the Indian Army, officials said on Friday. The Indian army responded in kind. This is the eighth consecutive night of unprovoked firing along the LoC. Civilians living along the LoC and IB have begun cleaning their community and individual bunkers to make them habitable in case of any escalation of shelling. —*PTI*

Security personnel keeps a vigil in Baramulla **PHOTO: PTI**

Security tight in Manipur on 2nd anniversary of violence

IMPHAL, 2 MAY

Security has been tightened across Manipur as a precautionary measure ahead of the second anniversary of the ethnic strife that began on 2 May, 2023.

Police have intensified frisking and vehicle checks in Imphal, Churachandpur and Kangpokpi district headquarters to monitor the movement of anti-social elements.

Security has also been beefed up in and around KhumanLampak in Imphal, where the Manipur People's Convention is scheduled. Central forces have been deployed in front of Kangla Gate.

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity a Meitei social organisation, has appealed to the public to suspend all activities on 3 May to attend the convention.

Volunteers used public address systems to remind citizens of the violence, highlighting the alleged threat to the state's territorial and administrative integrity.

Security forces were beefed as police intensified frisking and vehicle checks across the state on Friday. Several organisations called for a shutdown today **PHOTO: X/MANIPURPOLICE**

The Kuki Students' Organisation and Zomi Students' Federation also called for a shutdown on 3 May in all Kuki-dominated areas.

They encouraged people to participate in the event planned by the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum at the Churachandpur district headquarters and hoist black flags at their residences as a mark of mourning.

Over 260 people were killed and thousands rendered homeless in the ethnic violence involving Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. Meanwhile, two active members of the banned outfit UNLF (Koireng faction) were arrested in Imphal West district. —*PTI*

LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Parliamentary Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, during the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Govt has no clear strategy on Pahalgam: Kharge at CWC

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday said the government had not come out with any clear strategy to deal with the situation arising out of the Pahalgam terror attack.

"We will unitedly and strictly act against any challenge that comes in the way of the country's unity, integrity and prosperity. The entire Opposition is with the government," Kharge said.

Simultaneously, the party "time-bound accountability" into the "serious lapses" in one of the most heavily-guarded regions of the country.

The Congress further urged the Centre to act with firmness in the wake of the Pahalgam attack to "penalise" Pakistan for its continued export of terror and asserted this is a time for demonstrating collective will as a nation to "teach Pakistan a lesson".

The Congress President credited Rahul Gandhi for the government's recedecision to conduct a caste survey. Kharge said that the timing "surprised them".

However, Kharge added that caste surveys were completed in party ruled Telangana and Karnataka, noting that it was imperative the party pushed for a time-bound census. —*PTI*

Court issues notices to Sonia, Rahul in National Herald case

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

A Delhi court has issued notices to former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and opposition leader Rahul Gandhi in connection with the National Herald money laundering case. Special judge Vishal Gogne emphasised their "right to be heard," stating that this principle is essential for a fair trial.

The court has scheduled the next hearing for 8 May

Notices were also sent to Congress leader Sam Pitroda, Suman Dubey, and companies Dotex Merchandise Pvt Ltd and Young Indian. The charges were filed under sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

During the proceedings, additional Solicitor General SV Raju, representing the ED, indicated that the agency was not opposed to granting a right to be heard. The judge reiterated that the right to be heard aligns with the goals of the recently introduced Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). —*PTI*

COLONIALISM SUPPRESSED PLURALISM; NEED TO GIVE VOICE TO TRADITIONS: EAM

MUMBAI, 2 MAY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said colonialism and big power dominance suppressed pluralism in the past and it was essential to give voice to traditions, heritage and ideas amid attempts to democratise the world order.

Addressing the Global Media Dialogue along with Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw at the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit, he emphasised on smoother mobility for talent to contribute to stronger creativity.

Jaishankar also highlighted the enormous possibilities that the artificial intelligence (AI) era holds and asserted that "technology and tradition must go hand in hand", though it will come with its own issues.

He however, cautioned against increasing preoccupation with irresponsible use of emerging technologies.

"The world is intrinsically and essentially diverse, and that pluralism has been suppressed in the past by both colonialism and big power dominance," Jaishankar said. —*PTI*

Punjab parties unite on water sharing

CHANDIGARH, 2 MAY

In response to escalating tensions over water sharing between Punjab and Haryana, an all-party meeting convened by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab demonstrated a united front. The meeting took place on Friday, with representatives from AAP, Congress, BJP, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), and other parties participating.

The renewed discord stems from the Punjab government's refusal to allocate additional water to BJP-ruled Haryana. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann expressed dissatisfaction with the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB), which recently decided to release 8,500 cusecs of water to Haryana, insisting this was done without consulting Punjab.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, with state BJP President Sunil Jakhar, left, addresses a joint-press conference regarding Haryana-Punjab water sharing issue, in Chandigarh, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

During the conference, Mann stated, "We are already providing 4,000 cusecs to Haryana on humanitarian grounds." He condemned the BBMB's actions, labelling them as "robbery" of Punjab's rights.

BJP Punjab chief Sunil Jakhar stressed that the matter requires dialogue rather than confrontation, while Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini accused the AAP government of politicising a critical issue. Saini reiterated that water is a fundamental need and urged Punjab to act with integrity.

The Punjab government will hold a special Vidhan Sabha session on the water sharing issue on Monday, with plans to seek intervention from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. —*PTI*

'INTO THE 3RD MILLENNIUM'

Modi commissions Adani's Vizhinjam Seaport in Kerala

T'PURAM, 2 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially commissioned the Vizhinjam International Seaport on Friday, stating that the capacity of the trans-shipment hub would triple in the coming years, allowing some of the world's largest cargo ships to dock smoothly.

In his speech following the commissioning of the Rs 8,686 crore project, he noted that 75 per cent of India's trans-shipments had previously been carried out at foreign ports, resulting in a significant revenue loss.

"India's coastal states and port cities will become key centres for the growth of a developed India," the Prime Minister said.

Modi also noted that Kerala Ports Minister VN Vasavan had referred to the Adani Group, which developed the port, as a "partner" of the Communist-led state government, calling it symbolic of the changes in the country.

Kerala Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan during the inauguration of Vizhinjam International Seaport in Thiruvananthapuram, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Describing the commissioning of the seaport as a proud moment for Kerala, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said it marked not just the opening of a port but the gateway to the development prospects of the third millennium.

"This is a dream come true for Kerala. The port opens a link for India to the global maritime, trade and logistics map," Vijayan said in his address.

Highlighting the port's key features, Vijayan noted that the Kerala government contributed Rs 5,370.86 crore while the Adani Group , who developed the port, invested Rs 2,497 crore. The Central government provided Rs 818 crore as part of the Viability Gap Funding (VGF). —*PTI*

PM inaugurates Rs 58K crore projects in Andhra

Amaravati, 2 May

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated and laid the foundation for projects worth Rs 58,000 crore in Andhra Pradesh, including relaunching the construction of the greenfield capital city of Amaravati. Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation for 94 projects, which included capital city institutions, national highways, railway upgrades and defence-related installations.

As part of resuming the construction of Amaravati, the PM laid foundation for 74 projects worth Rs 49,000 crore, describing it as not a city but a "dream come true". —*PTI*

Tharoor's presence will give 'sleepless nights' to many: Modi

T'puram, 2 May

Prime Minister Narendra Modi commissioned the port in the presence of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, whose presence at the inauguration, Modi said, will give "sleepless nights" to many. "I would like to say to our Chief Minister, you are a big and strong pillar of the INDI Alliance. Shashi Tharoor is also sitting here, and I would like to say that today's event will take away the sleep of many," Modi said. Modi's direct mention Tharoor comes when the Congress MP is being accused by his own party of being soft on the BJP. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Delhi HC orders CBI probe into Tihar Jail extortion claim

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The Delhi High Court has ordered a preliminary probe by the CBI into allegations of an extortion racket operating within Tihar Jail, implicating its officials. Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela directed the Home Department to investigate possible administrative and supervisory failures. The court's decision followed disturbing findings reported by an inspecting judge, which suggested criminal activities and irregularities among jail authorities and inmates. The allegations include collusion with jail officials to extort money in exchange for providing certain amenities to prisoners. The CBI is to base its probe primarily on the inspecting judge's report, which also highlights misuse of official communication lines for illicit activities. —*PTI*

Fake doc held over former Assembly Speaker's death

BILASPUR, 2 MAY

Chhattisgarh police have apprehended Narendra Yadav, alias Narendra John Camm, a fraudulent cardiologist, from a jail in Madhya Pradesh in connection with the 2006 death of former assembly speaker Rajendra Prasad Shukla. Yadav, previously jailed for the deaths of seven patients following failed surgeries in Damoh, allegedly performed heart surgery on Shukla, who died after 18 days on a ventilator. Pradeep Shukla, the former speaker's son, filed a police complaint alleging Yadav's involvement, noting the hospital charged the state government Rs 20 lakh for the treatment. Investigations revealed Yadav's medical qualifications are fake, and he is accused of culpable homicide not amounting to murder and cheating. —*PTI*

MP jailer booked for abducting 17-year-old girl

SHAHDOL, 2 MAY

A deputy jailor in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh, has been booked for allegedly abducting a 17-year-old girl and confining her in a hotel room. Vikas Singh, posted at Burhar sub-jail, reportedly offered the girl a lift to the railway station on Wednesday night but instead took her to a hotel at Gandhi Chowk. A patrolling police team grew suspicious after seeing the girl with a man entering the hotel. Upon investigation, they found her locked inside a room. The girl was taken to Kotwali police station, where her statement was recorded by a female officer. Based on her account, a case was registered against Singh for kidnapping and unlawful confinement. He is currently absconding, and police efforts to trace him are ongoing. —*PTI*

Two teens held for stabbing another over feud in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 02 MAY

Two teenagers have been apprehended for stabbing a 15-year-old boy in north-east Delhi's Bhajanpura area over an old rivalry, police said on Friday. The incident occurred around 11.30pm on 28 April, when the victim, Shahid from Kabir Nagar, was found with stab wounds in the Vijay Park area. Locals rushed him to GTB Hospital. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northeast) Hareshwar V Swami said a case was registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at Bhajanpura police station. The two minors, aged 16 and 17, were taken into custody the following day. During interrogation, they admitted to attacking Shahid due to a past conflict. The weapon used, a knife, was recovered from their possession, officials confirmed.—*PTI*

Nepali student found dead at KIIT Odisha

Kathmandu urges Odisha, New Delhi for high-level probe after 2nd suicide in 3 months

BHUBANESWAR, 2 MAY

An 18-year-old Nepalese student allegedly died by suicide in KIIT University, Odisha, making it the second such incident in less than three months.

Concerned about the safety of its students, the Nepal government on Friday initiated diplomatic efforts to ensure a high-level investigation, a day after she was found hanging.

The body of the BTech computer science student, Prisa Sah, was recovered from her hostel room at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) on Thursday evening, police said.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated diplomatic initiatives to investigate the incident through high-ranking officials of the Government of India, the Government of Odisha, and the Embassy of Nepal in Delhi," Nepal's Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba said on X.

Students protest outside the KIIT campus in Bhubaneswar around three months ago after a student was found dead **PHOTO: PTI**

According to officials, there are around 1,000 Nepalese students in KIIT.

Nepal's Ambassador Shankar P Sharma requested Odisha Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary to ensure a thorough investigation. The Embassy added that it was in touch with Nepalese students, KIIT authorities and both the Central and Odisha governments.

"The fresh incident took place in the same hostel and the same floor where Prakriti's body was found," a police officer claimed. However, police haven't found any suicide note.

Sah's death comes barely two-and-a-half months after Prakriti Lamsal, another Nepalese student of the same institute, died by suicide on 16 February. Following the incident, several Nepalese students were forcibly evicted from the campus. At least 10 university employees were arrested on charges of assaulting Nepalese students, and an Indian student was sent to jail for "abetting" the suicide of Lamsal. —*PTI*

(Suicide is not the solution. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.)

STUDENT FOUND DEAD AT BITS PILANI HOSTEL ROOM IN GOA

PANAJI, 2 MAY

A 20-year-old student of BITS Pilani's Goa campus was found hanging in his hostel room, in what police suspect is a case of suicide.

Krishna Kasera, a native of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, was found hanging in his hostel room at 10.15am on Thursday, an official from Verna police said on Friday. This is the third case of student suicide at the institution's Goa campus in five months.

"The 20-year-old student was pursuing a dual-degree programme, and exams were currently underway at the college," a senior police officer said.

On 4 March, a 20-year-old student was similarly found hanging inside his hostel room, and another case of suicide was reported on 10 December, 2024. The BITS Pillani management could not be reached despite repeated attempts. —*PTI*

Cars damaged by an uprooted tree after strong winds and heavy rainfall, at Sheikh Sarai area in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Seven dead in rain-related incidents across North India

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

A three-hour heavy downpour accompanied by a dust storm hit Delhi-NCR early morning on Friday, as seven people were killed in rain-related incidents across North India.

In Delhi's Najafgarh, three children and a woman died after a tree fell on their house following strong gusty winds that accompanied rains in the city. The woman's husband was the only survivor of the incident.

The city received 77mm of rain in just three hours since 5am. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for the city, urging people to remain extremely vigilant and take necessary precautions.

Three flights were diverted and over 200 flights were delayed at the Delhi airport as thunderstorms and gusty winds disrupted operations.

Meanwhile at least three people, including a minor were killed and several injured in separate incidents when lightning struck large parts of Uttar Pradesh on Friday morning.

According to the IMD, West Uttar Pradesh is likely to witness rain and thundershowers at a few places on 3 and 4 May, accompanied by strong surface winds of 25-35 km/hr and gusty winds reaching 40-50 km/hr at isolated locations.

In East Uttar Pradesh, isolated rains are expected on 3 May and more widespread showers on 4 May. Thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds (30-50 km/hr) are also likely during this period.

The IMD advised residents to stay alert and take precautions in view of the expected weather disturbances. —*PTI*

U'khand minor's rape: HC orders tight vigil

NAINITAL, 2 MAY

The Uttarakhand High Court has taken suo motu cognisance of rising tensions in Nainital after a 12-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 60-year-old man from a minority community. A division bench comprising Justice Manoj Kumar Tiwari and Justice Vivek Bharti Sharma on Thursday directed the police to maintain law and order, prevent crowd gatherings, monitor vehicles entering the city and intensify patrolling.

The accused, Osman, a local contractor, has been arrested. The incident triggered communal unrest, with protests erupting outside the police station, led by members of Hindu organisations demanding capital punishment. Some shops owned by Muslims were vandalised, and stones were thrown at a nearby mosque. The Vyapar Mandal also called for a bandh, shutting shops in protest.

Referring to the violent clashes in Haldwani's Banbhoolpura area last year following the demolition of a madrasa, the court warned against a repeat scenario. Authorities have been instructed to issue public appeals for calm and monitor internet platforms to curb the spread of misinformation.

Deputy Advocate General J.S. Virk informed the court that police forces have been deployed across the district, and vehicles from Haldwani, Kaladhungi, and Bhimtal are being thoroughly checked.

District Magistrate Vandana Singh and SSP Prahalad Meena have implemented a series of measures to maintain peace. The High Court emphasised the need for restraint and swift legal action, urging all communities to uphold harmony. —*PTI*

Two groups clashed on Wednesday night after the family of a minor lodged a rape complaint against a 65-year-old man in Nainital **PHOTO: PTI**

Ramdev vows not to disparage Rooh Afza

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Yoga guru Ramdev provided an undertaking in Delhi High Court on Friday to refrain from making disparaging comments or posting similar content on social media regarding Hamdard's Rooh Afza, following his controversial "sharbat jihad" remark. Justice Amit Bansal, who ordered the removal of the contentious online material on 1 May , requested Ramdev's counsel to submit an affidavit later that day.

An undertaking was also submitted by Ramdev's Patanjali Foods Ltd. The case arose from a lawsuit filed by Hamdard National Foundation India over Ramdev's claims that revenue from Rooh Afza was used to support madrasas and mosques.

The court characterised Ramdev's "sharbat jihad" comment as indefensible and stated it disturbed the court's conscience.

Although the objectionable YouTube video was made private rather than removed, Ramdev's counsel expressed deep respect for the court and assured compliance. —*PTI*

Interior decorator held in Kolkata hotel fire

KOLKATA, 2 MAY

A fourth individual has been arrested in connection with the catastrophic fire at the Rituraj Hotel in Kolkata, which resulted in the tragic death of 14 people. Khurshid Alam, an interior decorator, was apprehended at his residence in Park Circus. Authorities indicate that Alam neglected safety regulations during his decoration work, employing flammable materials that contributed to the rapid spread of the fire.

Police arrested the owner and manager on Wednesday, following the inferno that engulfed the six-storey building in Burrabazar. Firefighters discovered 13 charred bodies

in the aftermath, with one additional victim succumbing to injuries, raising the death toll to 14.

Investigators are exploring whether ongoing construction works on the hotel's first floor exacerbated the blaze. —*PTI*

NCW summons Ullu App CEO, actor

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

- A video clip purportedly features Ajaz Khan pressuring female contestants to engage in intimate and inappropriate acts on camera, despite their visible discomfort and refusal

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has summoned Ullu App CEO Vibhu Agarwal and actor Ajaz Khan following concerns over allegedly coercive and vulgar content involving female participants in the web series "House Arrest." The NCW took suo motu notice of the series and condemned the nature of its content. Both Agarwal and Khan have been ordered to appear before the commission on 9 May.

A video clip, reportedly from the show and dated 29 April, ignited outrage on social media. It purportedly features Khan pressuring female contestants to engage in intimate and inappropriate acts on camera, despite their visible discomfort and refusal. Allegations suggest that the women were also asked to undress on set, raising serious questions about consent, safety, and exploitation within digital entertainment.

Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar described the content as "deeply disturbing," stating that it violates women's dignity and blurs the line between entertainment and abuse. "We will not tolerate media content that promotes misogyny or coerces women into compromising situations," Rahatkar emphasised.

The commission warned that if these allegations are substantiated, they could attract legal repercussions under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and the Information Technology Act, 2000. The NCW has urged streaming platforms to adopt responsible practices that uphold the law and protect women's rights.

Meanwhile, Ullu App has removed Ajaz Khan's reality show "House Arrest" following the NCW's summons. —*PTI*

MEN MOST AFFECTED

Extreme temps killed 35,000 between 2001–19

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

At least 35,000 lives were lost in India due to exposure to extreme temperatures between 2001 and 2019, a study has found.

In 2015 alone, it estimated 1,907 deaths due to a heatstroke and 1,147 because of cold exposure. Data for analysis was taken from the India Meteorological Department and National Crime Records Bureau, among other datasets.

Findings, published in the journal 'Temperature', show an upward-moving, increasing trend in deaths due to a heatstroke and exposure to cold temperatures. Men of working age were the largest demographic of fatalities.

The authors wrote, "Between 2001 and 2019, India reported 19,693 and 15,197 deaths due to heatstroke and cold exposure, respectively."

Between 2001-2019, deaths due to extreme heat were three to five times higher among men, while those due to extreme cold were four to seven times higher, compared to women, the researchers said.

State-wise, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab were found to record the most deaths due to a heatstroke, whereas Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Bihar recorded the most from extreme cold temperatures.

Lead author Pradeep Guin from OP Jindal Global University, Haryana, said that deaths due to exposure to extreme temperatures are avoidable.

"With an intense heatwave forecast to hit most of the country this summer and extreme weather events becoming more frequent around the globe as the world warms, there is no time to be lost in raising awareness about the dangers of extreme temperatures and putting in place measures to reduce their impact," Guin said. "Support systems exist, but more needs to be done." —*PTI*

Muslim family converts in UP; calls it 'ghar wapsi'

MATHURA, 2 MAY

In a significant religious ceremony held at an ashram in Vrindavan, eight members of a Muslim family from the Jamunapar area of Mathura converted to Hinduism on Thursday. The family, now claiming their ancestral roots, participated in Vedic rituals and voluntarily changed their names.

Head of the family, 50-year-old Zakir, who is now named Jagdish, expressed that their conversion was a return to their true heritage. Originally hailing from the Gurjar community, Jagdish stated, "Our ancestors were Hindus until the Mughal era. They converted to Islam under pressure. I have continued to worship Goddess Kali." The family had contemplated this decision for three years.

The conversion took place at Bhagwat Dham Ashram, facilitated by Hindu Yuva Vahini. Following a one-hour havan-yajna ritual, the family members changed their names: Jagdish, Gudiya, Sumit, Rameshwar, Savitri, Shatrughan, Saraswati, and Sneha.

Sharad Saini, a Hindu Yuva Vahini activist, noted their purification with Ganga water, while Vrindavan Kotwali in-charge Prashant Kapil confirmed the ceremony was peaceful and voluntary, with no police intervention necessary. —*PTI*

WORLD AUTISM DAY

An aerial view of the canvas painting by Kanyeyachukwu Tagbo Okeke, a 15-year-old autistic artist who won the Guinness World Record for the world's largest canvas, on display at the Eagle Square on World Autism Day in Abuja, Nigeria. Autism Spectrum Disorder, is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person communicates, interacts with others, and experiences the world. ***PHOTO: PTI***

US-Ukraine deal good for Kyiv, but Trump a worry

The US and Ukraine have finally signed a long-awaited agreement on Ukraine's postwar reconstruction – and, at first reading, the details appear more favourable for Kyiv than many observers expected.

At the core of the "economic partnership agreement" is the exploitation of Ukraine's mineral wealth. Ukraine will get access to US investment and technology, and the US will eventually get a share of the profits. The rest will finance the war-torn nation's recovery if and when a peace agreement is signed with Russia.

Several aspects of this deal stand out as positive for Ukraine. Unlike in previous drafts, the country retains ownership of its natural resources. All profits are to be invested in Ukraine for ten years after the agreement comes into force.

Washington can also make its contribution in the form of new military aid.

Earlier in the negotiations, a major sticking point was the demand from the US President, Donald Trump, that the agreement include compensation for past US aid to Ukraine, which he insisted amounted to USD 350 billion. Many analysts estimate the figure is closer to USD120 billion.

Before the deal was signed, Ukraine's Prime Minister, Denys Shmyhal, said the deal would "not include assistance provided before its signing". And the Ukrainian government announcement stated that the new agreement "focuses on further, not past US military assistance". But when the US treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, spoke to journalists, he described the deal as "compensation" for "the funding and the weapons".

Whether Bessent's statement represents political spin, or whether there is still distance between Washington and Kyiv on this critical point, remains to be seen. The formal text has not been released, and many details remain to be ironed out.

The new agreement reportedly states that the US and Ukraine share a 'long-term strategic alignment' ***PHOTO: PTI***

Indeed, the signing of this agreement is just the latest twist in a broader effort to bring the war in Ukraine to an end – one which probably still has many surprises ahead. Trump appears to be losing patience with what he views as Russia's refusal to engage with the peace process.

The new agreement reportedly states that the US and Ukraine share a "long-term strategic alignment".

The American humorist Mark Twain is said to have once defined a mine as "a hole in the ground owned by a liar". Assessing the precise scale of underground mineral deposits is notoriously difficult – and not every deposit can be extracted in a profitable fashion.

Many of the minerals that supposedly lie under Ukraine's surface are so called "rare earths", which are critical to hi-tech supply chains. But they are also expensive and time-consuming to exploit, requiring a massive upfront investment which may eventually be lost. Even in successful cases, it generally takes over a decade to get production onstream. Most of Ukraine's supposed deposits lie in the east of the country in areas vulnerable to Russian attack, making investment risky.

All of this makes economic partnership agreement of doubtful long-term significance for the broader peace process. The potential gains from it are too hypothetical to make much difference within a meaningful timescale. The deal is unlikely to generate much real economic incentive for the US to defend Ukraine, and so is unlikely to become a new source of military assistance for Kyiv.

For the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, the deal doesn't change a lot. Trump is running out of patience with Russia, it does little to change the underlying realities of the conflict.

We can't rule out the possibility that Trump, as unpredictable as ever, might make a more meaningful commitment to Ukraine in the future, one that changes the course of the war. *—PTI*

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SALAR سالار

TikTok fined $600M over data transfer to China

European Union privacy watchdogs fined TikTok USD 600 million on Friday after a four-year investigation found that the video sharing app's data transfers to China breached the EU's strict data privacy rules.

Ireland's Data Protection Commission also sanctioned TikTok for not being transparent with users about where their personal data was being sent and ordered the company to comply with the rules within six months.

The Irish national watchdog serves as TikTok's lead data privacy regulator in the 27-nation EU because the company's European headquarters is based in Dublin.

"TikTok failed to verify, guarantee and demonstrate that the personal data of (European) users, remotely accessed by staff in China, was afforded a level of protection essentially equivalent to that guaranteed within the EU," Deputy Commissioner Graham Doyle said in a statement.

TikTok said it disagreed with the decision and plans to appeal.

The company said in a blog post that the decision focuses on a "select period" ending in May 2023, before it embarked on a data localization project called Project Clover that involved building three data centres in Europe.

"The facts are that Project Clover has some of the most stringent data protections anywhere in the industry, including unprecedented independent oversight by NCC Group, a leading European cybersecurity firm," said Christine Grahn, TikTok's European head of public policy and government relations. "The decision fails to fully consider these considerable data security measures."

TikTok, whose parent company ByteDance is based in China, has been under scrutiny in Europe over how it handles personal information of its users amid concerns from Western officials that it poses a security risk over user data sent to China. In 2023, the watchdog fined the company hundreds of millions of euros in a separate child privacy investigation.

The Irish watchdog said its investigation found that TikTok failed to address "potential access by Chinese authorities" to European users' personal data under Chinese laws on anti-terrorism, counter-espionage, cybersecurity and national intelligence that were identified as materially diverging' from EU standards."

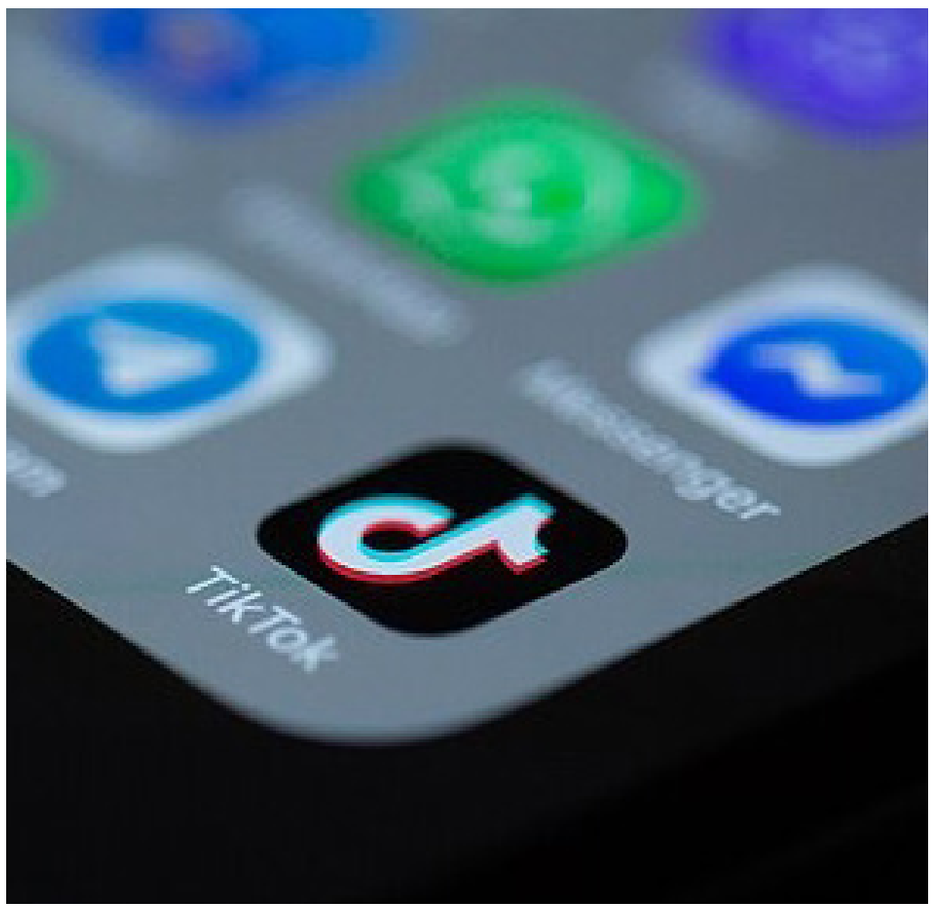
Grahn said TikTok has "has never received a request for European user data from the Chinese authorities, and has never provided European user data to them."

Under the EU rules, known as the General Data Protection Regulation, European user data can only be transferred outside of the bloc if there are safeguards in place to ensure the same level of protection.

The investigation, which opened in September 2021, also found that TikTok's privacy policy at the time did not name third countries, including China, where user data was transferred. The watchdog said the policy, which has since been updated, failed to explain that data processing involved "remote access to personal data stored in Singapore and the United States by personnel based in China".

TikTok faces further scrutiny from the Irish regulator, which said that the company had provided inaccurate information to throughout the inquiry by saying that it didn't store European user data on Chinese servers. It wasn't until April that it informed the regulator that it discovered in February that some data had in fact been stored on Chinese servers.

Doyle said that the watchdog is taking the recent developments "very seriously" and "considering what further regulatory action may be warranted". *—PTI*



The Irish watchdog said its investigation found that TikTok failed to address 'potential access by Chinese authorities' to European users' personal data under Chinese laws ***PHOTO: WIKI COMMONS***

What are the major issues in Australia's election on Saturday?

Australians vote Saturday in general elections being dominated by the soaring cost of living, the economy, energy and China.

Affordable housing is in short supply, interest rates remain high and the major political parties are starkly divided on how to wean the nation off fossil fuel-generated electricity.

The major parties also differ on how to deal with China, which is both Australia's largest trading partner and its greatest strategic threat.

Here's what to know about the main issues:

Australians have endured one of the sharpest rises in the cost of living in recent history and the current government has been at the helm through the worst of it.

Prices of eggs surged 11 per cent last year and beer rose 4 per cent, according to government figures. Average rents rose 4.8 per cent last year after a 8.1 per cent spike in 2023, property analyst CoreLogic said.

The central bank's benchmark interest rate rose from a record low 0.1 per cent to 0.35 per cent two weeks before Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's center-left Labor Party came to power in 2022's elections.

The rate has been raised a dozen times since then, peaking at 4.35 per cent in November 2023. Annual inflation peaked that year at 7.8 per cent.

The central bank reduced the inflation rate by a quarter percentage point in February to 4.1 per cent in an indication that the worst of the cost of living crisis had passed.

Inflation has put some builders out of business, exacerbating a shortage of housing, which in turn has inflated rents.

The government has provided tax cuts and assistance for some rent and energy bills, but critics argue government spending has contributed to maintaining elevated inflation.

Labour has vowed to reduce the deposit first time home buyers will be required to pay from 20 per cent to 5 per cent with the government becoming guarantor for the difference.

The opposition has also pledged to make mortgage interest payments tax deductible for many first home buyers.

Many economists argue the rival policies would both inflate home prices while achieving little to increase the supply of housing.

Both parties agree on one goal: to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Australians have endured one of the sharpest rises in the cost of living in recent history and the current government has been at the helm through the worst of it ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

The government argues Australia's existing coal and gas-fired generators won't last long enough to meet the nation's needs until nuclear power arrives. It plans to have 82 per cent of Australia's energy grid powered by renewables by 2030.

The opposition argues the government's policy of replacing coal and gas with renewable energy sources including wind turbines and solar cells is unachievable, and would reduce investment in clean energy technologies.

The opposition would rely on more gas to generate electricity until atomic power was established. It would not set a new target for 2030 before the election.

Beijing barred minister-to-minister contacts with Australia and imposed a series of official and unofficial bans on commodities including coal, wine, barley, wood and lobsters that cost Australian exporters up to USD 13 billion a year.

The thaw started almost immediately with the election of the Labour Party in 2022. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang wrote to congratulate Albanese on his election victory within days.

All the trade barriers were gradually lifted and Albanese met President Xi Jinping during a state visit to Beijing in 2023.

Opposition leader Peter Dutton, a longtime critic of China, has claimed that bilateral relations would improve even further with a tough and uncompromising approach. He has accused Albanese of self-censorship to avoid offending Beijing. ***—PTI***

Drone strikes vessel carrying aid to Gaza near Malta

TEL AVIV, 2 MAY

A drone struck a vessel carrying aid to Gaza off the coast Friday off the coast of Malta, said a statement by Codepink, a grassroots peace and social justice movement. The vessel belonging to the Gaza Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC) was trying to get food and supplies to people in Gaza, said the statement. Malta's government said 12 crew members and 4 civilians were on board and no casualties were reported. For two months Israel has blocked food, medical supplies and humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, throwing 2 million Palestinians into the worst humanitarian crisis in nearly 19 months of war. Israeli military has blocked past attempts by pro-palestinian activists to bring aid to Gaza by sea. The Israaeli army didn't respond to queries. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mangione wants case dropped, cites double jeopardy

NEW YORK, 2 MAY

Luigi Mangione's lawyers have urged a judge to drop murder charges in United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson' killing, arguing that the New York case and a federal death penalty prosecution amount to double jeopardy. If that doesn't happen, they want terrorism charges dismissed, his statements to police officers excluded as he was not informed of his rights. They argued prosecutors be barred from using evidence against Mangione, 26, including a notebook describing his intent to "wack" an insurance executive as they did not have a search warrant. Mangione expressed concern for a McDonald's employee who had alerted them about his whereabouts. They called multiple cases "unprecedented prosecutorial one-upmanship." . The Manhattan district attorney's office will respond in court papers. —*PTI*

Chimney installed on Sistine Chapel for papal election

VATICAN CITY, 2 MAY

Preparations for the conclave to find a new pope accelerated on Friday with Vatican fire fighters installing the chimney out of the Sistine Chapel that will signal the election of a successor to Pope Francis on 7 May. After every two rounds of voting in the Sistine Chapel, the ballots of the cardinals are burned in a special furnace to indicate the outcome to the outside world. If no pope is chosen, the ballots are mixed with cartridges containing potassium perchlorate, anthracene and sulphur to produce black smoke. The burning ballots are mixed with potassium chlorate, lactose and chloroform resin to produce the white smoke to indicate a winner. —*PTI*

Russell Brand granted bail by UK Court in rape cases

LONDON, 2 MAY

Actor-comedian Russell Brand was granted bail at a London court on Friday on charges of rape and sexual assault involving four women. Brand, 49, arrived at Westminster Magistrates' Court for his first hearing. Brand faces one count of rape, one of indecent assault, one of oral rape and two of sexual assault. The alleged offenses took place between 1999 and 2005. In September 2023, British media published claims by four women of being sexually assaulted or raped by Brand. The accusers have not been identified. Brand has denied engaging in "non-consensual activity". Brand hosted radio and television shows, wrote memoirs and appeared in several Hollywood movies. His online videos have considerable following. —*PTI*

Israel military strikes near Syria's presidential palace

Druze minority in Syria targeted by pro-govt gunmen

DAMASCUS, 2 MAY

Israel's air force struck near Syria's presidential palace early Friday hours after warning Syrian authorities not to march toward villages inhabited by members of a minority sect Druze in southern Syria.

The strike, the second this week by Israel came after days of clashes between pro-Syrian government gunmen and fighters of the Druze minority that left dozens of people dead or wounded and appears to warn Syria's new leadership that is mostly made up of Islamist groups led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

The Druze religious sect is a minority group that began as a 10th-century offshoot of Ismailism, a branch of Shiite Islam. More than half of the roughly one million Druze worldwide live in Syria. Most of the other Druze live in Lebanon and Israel, including in the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 Mideast War and annexed in 1981.

Israel air bombs fell near the Syrian presidential palace to warn the new regime on clashes with Druze community PHOTO: FB/YNET NEWS

On Thursday, Syria's Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Hikmat Al-Hijri harshly criticized Syria's government for what he called an "unjustified genocidal attack" on the minority community.

The clashes broke out around midnight Monday after an audio clip circulated on social media of a man criticising Islam's Prophet Muhammad. The audio was attributed to a Druze cleric Marwan Kiwan who has refuted this.

Syria's Information Ministry said 11 members of the country's security forces were killed in two separate attacks, while Britain-based war monitor The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 56 people in Sahnaya and the Druze-majority Damascus suburb of Jaramana were killed in clashes, among them local gunmen and security forces. – *PTI*

Rubio gets 2 top national security roles, replaces Waltz

Michael Waltz is US ambassador to the United Nations, while Secretary of State Marco Rubio to serve as interim national security adviser

WASHINGTON, 2 MAY

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has replaced Mike Waltz as National Security Adviser will take on two top national security jobs at once as President Donald Trump presses forward with his top-to-bottom revamp of US foreign policy.

Waltz's removal had been rumoured for weeks — ever since he created a Signal group chat and accidentally added a journalist to the conversation where top national security officials shared sensitive military plans.

Just over 100 days into his tenure as America's top diplomat, Rubio now becomes just the second person to hold both positions after the late Henry Kissinger, who served as both secretary of state and national security adviser for two years under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford in the 1970s.

Rubio — a one-time Trump rival and hawkish conservative who was derided by the president as "Little Marco" during the 2016 presidential campaign — has proven adept at aligning himself with Trump's "America First" foreign policy positions. Rubio has largely eschewed his staunch advocacy of providing foreign aid and promoting democracy overseas since taking over the State Department, repeating a refrain that every policy or programme should make America safer, stronger or more prosperous.

"Marco Rubio, unbelievable," Trump said Thursday before announcing on social media that Waltz would be nominated as ambassador to the United Nations and Rubio would take over as national security adviser in the interim. "When I have a problem, I call up Marco, he gets it solved." —*PTI*

Vance says Waltz's new role is a 'promotion'

Washington, 2 May

US Vice President JD Vance slammed the media coverage of national security adviser Mike Waltz's firing and subsequent appointment as United Nations ambassador by President Donald Trump and said it was a 'promotion.'

In an interview with Bret Baier of Fox News Channel Vance said, "The media wants to frame this as a firing. Donald Trump has fired a lot of people. He doesn't give them Senate-confirmed appointments afterwards."

He also denied the possibility that the recent move against Waltz was related to his involvement in Signal-gate, when the former NSA leaked the Trump administration's attack plans on the Houthi rebels through Signal. "No, it's not," Vance claimed. "I think you could make a good argument it's a promotion," Vance added, defending Waltz for completing the job for what he was picked for by the US President. – *Agencies*

China says assessing US proposals for starting talks to reduce tariffs

BEIJING, 2 MAY

China on Friday said it is assessing whether to start trade talks with the US on tariff reductions following recent approaches by Washington, even as it emphasised that the US must show sincerity and remove all 'unilateral tariffs' before talks.

China's commerce ministry said in a statement that Us had reached out for talks. "The tariff and trade wars were unilaterally initiated by the United States. If the US wants to negotiate, it must demonstrate sincerity, and make preparations and take concrete actions on issues such as correcting its erroneous practices and lifting the unilateral tariffs," the statement by its spokesperson said. China's softening stand on the tariffs came amid reports a number of ships carrying goods to the US started to return back as the new tariffs came into effect.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Despite China putting a brave front, there is considerable concern about the impact of Trump's tariffs on its economy, which is has slowed down due to falling exports, low domestic consumption and collapse of the housing market.

On 16 April, China appointed a new top international negotiator after Trump said the ball is in Beijing's court to end the tariff deadlock. —*PTI*

US-Iran nuclear talks postponed as tensions continue

TEHRAN, 2 MAY

The fourth round of nuclear talks involving Iran, Oman, and the United States has been postponed due to logistical and technical issues, according to Iran's Foreign Minister, Seyed Abbas Araghchi. Emphasising Iran's commitment to a fair and balanced deal, Araghchi asserted that Tehran remains determined to secure an agreement that will end sanctions while ensuring the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.

Meanwhile, Trump has threatened to impose sanctions on any country or individual buying Iranian oil and petrochemical products. This move follows recent sanctions on Chinese companies involved in purchasing Iranian crude oil. —*PTI*

Vance says Ukraine war not ending anytime soon

MOSCOW, WASHINGTON, 2 MAY

US Vice-President JD Vance has said the war in Ukraine is "not going to end any time soon", in an interview with Fox News. Vance said the question facing the US administration now was how it could help Russia and Ukraine "find middle ground" to end the conflict that has been raging for more than three years.

But, Vance added, "It's going to be up to [Russia and Ukraine] to come to an agreement and stop this brutal, brutal conflict".

His comments came shortly after Washington signed a deal with Kyiv to share the profits of Ukraine's rare earth minerals in return for future US security assistance.

Meanwhile, Russia said it foiled a massive raid and claimed it downed 121 Ukrainian drones overnight in Crimea, the Black Sea, and other southern parts of the country, according to a media report on Friday. "The Russian military repelled a series of Ukrainian drone raids overnight on Thursday, downing a total of 121 UAVs," rt.com news website reported, quoting Defence Ministry officials.

> It's going to be up to [Russia and Ukraine] to come to an agreement and stop this brutal, brutal conflict
>
> —JD Vance, US Vice President

The ministry said 89 fixed-wing drones were intercepted over Crimea's Sevastopol, which is home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Another 23 drones were shot down over the Black Sea. The ministry said there was no damage on the ground. – *Agencies*

Former SKorean PM Han to contest in polls

SEOUL, 2 MAY

Former South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo announced on Friday his candidacy for next month's presidential election, vowing to reduce the powers of the presidency and ease political tensions if elected. His entry intensifies the race among conservative candidates seeking to unite against liberal front-runner Lee Jae-myung, whose campaign has faced setbacks due to ongoing legal challenges related to election law violations.

"I've determined to find what I can do for the future of the Republic of Korea that I love and for all of us," Han stated at a press conference in the National Assembly. The early presidential election is scheduled for 3 June, following the ousting of conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol amid martial law imposition.

Han Duck-soo PHOTO: X

Han, whose political career spans 40 years, previously served as prime minister under both conservative and liberal administrations. Although he does not belong to a political party, the main conservative People Power Party is in discussions to select a unified candidate.

Han emphasised his intention to amend the constitution to promote checks and balances between the presidency and the assembly. He also pledged to address trade issues, specifically focusing on tariffs imposed during Donald Trump's presidency. —*PTI*

AfD listed 'right-wing extremist' party

BERLIN, 2 MAY

The German domestic intelligence service said on Friday that it has classified the Alternative for Germany party (AfD), which was placed second in national elections in February, as a "right-wing extremist effort," making it subject to greater and broader surveillance of its activities.

The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution found that the party, does not consider people with "a migration history from predominantly Muslim countries to be equal members of the German people" based on ethnicity.

The office, which has warned of growing extremism in Germany, cited court decisions in two German regions in recent years that detailed party efforts to undermine a free and democratic order.

The party "aims to exclude certain populations from equal participation in society, to subject them to unconstitutional unequal treatment and to assign them a legally devalued status," it said. —*PTI*

The Federal Office in Germany says AfD is right wing extremist and racist PHOTO: X@MATTMOOREK

21 FIREFIGHTERS INJURED IN ISRAEL FIRE

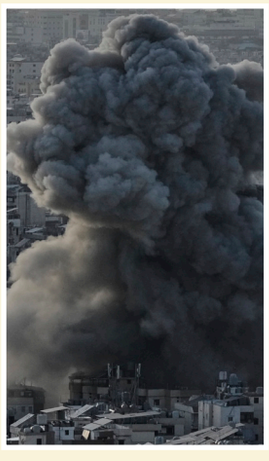
TEL AVIV, 2 MAY

Israel concluded operation "Wall of Fire," successfully putting out the wildfires in the Jerusalem Mountains, with 21 fire fighters sustaining injuries, mainly from smoke inhalation and contact with extreme heat.

During 33 crucial hours, firefighters acted with determination as a living wall between the fire and the city. Hence the operation was named "Wall of Fire."

The operation saymbolized the uncompromising spirit of the firefighters, who operated under complex conditions and in eight simultaneous fire sectors.

1,430 fire fighters from all districts,167 fire engines, 38 ATVS, 12 fire fighting aircrafts, four helicopters, eight drones and advanced forecasting systems and five leviathan vehicles were engaged in the rescue operations. —*PTI*



SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

CIA's slick videos to enrol Chinese spies

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

The CIA on Thursday released two celluloid scripted mandarin videos aimed at recruiting disillusioned Chinese government officials as spies to leak sensitive information to the United States - a sign of the agency's efforts to penetrate the Communist Party's inner circle.

The videos, titled "Why I Contacted CIA: To Take Control of My Fate" and "Why I Contacted CIA: For a Better Life", were posted on social media platforms including Instagram and Facebook, as well as YouTube. The videos showcase fictional Chinese officials secretly contacting the CIA, expressing disillusionment with the country's political system and a desire to protect their families' futures.

"As I rise within the party, I watch those above me being discarded like worn-out shoes, but now I realise that my fate was just as precarious as theirs," the narrator says in Mandarin Chinese in one of the videos as the camera shows empty seats around a lavish dinner table.

The videos are part of a larger CIA strategy launched last October to recruit informants in China PHOTO: YT/ Central Intelligence Agency

"My family's fate cannot rest in their hands," the man says before the video depicts him contacting the CIA using a tablet computer. It ends with the CIA logo and dark web contact details for the agency.

The videos are part of a larger CIA strategy launched last October to recruit informants in China, Iran, and North Korea. The agency has posted secure contact instructions online and believes the messaging is breaking through China's strict internet controls. "If it weren't working, we wouldn't be making more videos," a CIA official told Reuters. "No adversary had ever posed a more formidable challenge to the US than the CCP," CIA Director John Ratcliffe said. "It is intent on dominating the world economically, militarily, and technologically," he said in a statement. "Our agency must continue responding to this threat with urgency, creativity, and grit, and these videos are just one of the ways we are doing this."

China's embassy in Washington has not yet responded to the videos, but it has previously accused the US of waging a systematic disinformation campaign against China. —*Agencies*

Prince Harry loses appeal on UK-funded security

LONDON, 2 MAY

Prince Harry lost his appeal Friday challenging the UK government's decision to strip him of his publicly funded security after he stepped away from royal family duties and moved to the US.

The Court of Appeal ruled unanimously that a committee hadn't treated Harry unfairly when it decided to review his protection on a case-by-case basis each time he visits the UK.

The ruling is likely to leave the Duke of Sussex with a large bill to pay the UK government's legal fees — in addition to his own lawyers' costs.

It wasn't immediately clear if he would try to appeal to the UK Supreme Court.

The ruling upheld a High Court judge's decision last year that found a "bespoke" plan for the Duke of Sussex's security wasn't unlawful, irrational or unjustified. —*PTI*

PHOTO:ANI

Gold climbs Rs 1,080 to Rs 96,800/10 g

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Gold prices climbed Rs 1,080 to Rs 96,800 per 10g in the national capital on Friday due to fresh buying from jewellers amid a firm trend overseas, according to the All India Sarafa Association. On Thursday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity plunged Rs 2,830 to Rs 95,720 per 10g. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity rose Rs 180 to Rs 96,350 per 10g. It had depreciated Rs 1,930 to Rs 96,170 per 10g in the previous market session.Traders said gold rallied due to fresh demand from local jewellers and a firm trend in the international markets. Spot gold rose USD 23.10, or 0.71 per cent, to USD 3,262.30 per ounce in the global markets. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 1P, settles at 84.53 against USD

MUMBAI, 2 MAY

The rupee on Friday hit a seven-month high and rose past the 84 per dollar level on sustained foreign fund inflows and stronger domestic data, but pared the gains and settled for the day higher by just 1 paisa at 84.53 against the greenback. In a highly volatile trade, the rupee on Friday touched an intra-day high of 83.76 -- the highest levels since October 2024 -- but failed to sustain the momentum and ended the session on a flat note with gains of just 1 paisa. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 83.98 and moved between the intra-day high of 83.76 and the low of 84.55 against the greenback. *—PTI*

Alembic gets USFDA nod for generic drug

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Friday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market a generic medication for the prevention of heart attack and stroke. The company has received final approval from the US Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) for its abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) for Ticagrelor Tablets, 90 mg and tentative approval for Ticagrelor Tablets, 60 mg, Alembic Pharma said in a statement. The company's approved ANDA is therapeutically equivalent to AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals's Brilinta Tablets, 60 mg and 90 mg, it added. Ticagrelor tablets are indicated to reduce the risk of cardiovascular (CV) death, myocardial infarction (MI), and stroke in patients with acute coronary syndrome. Alembic shares were trading 0.03 per cent down at Rs 876.10 apiece on BSE.*—PTI*

PHOTO:X

Govt issues ITR-3 for business income taxpayers

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The Income Tax Department has notified ITR Form 3 for Assessment Year 2025-26, applicable to individuals and HUFs with income from business or profession. The threshold for reporting assets and liabilities under 'Schedule AL' has been raised from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore, easing the compliance burden on middle-income taxpayers. Capital gains must now be split based on whether they arose before or after 23 July, 2024. The government proposed reducing long-term capital gains tax on real estate to 12.5 per cent without indexation, from 20 per cent with indexation. Taxpayers can opt to pay the new 12.5 per cent rate or claim the indexation benefit at 20 per cent. *—PTI*

S&P cuts India's FY26 GDP growth forecast to 6.3%

S&P projects INR/USD exchange rate to be 88 by 2025-end

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

S&P Global Ratings on Friday cut India's growth projections by 0.2 percentage points to 6.3 per cent for the current fiscal year citing uncertainty over the US tariff policy and downside risks from its spillover to the economy.

In its report titled "Global Macro Update: Seismic Shift In US Trade Policy Will Slow World Growth", S&P Global Ratings said "we reiterate that there are no winners in a scenario of escalating protectionist policies."

S&P said among Asia-Pacific's major economies, China is expected to see its growth drop by 0.7 percentage points in 2025 to 3.5 per cent and in 2026 to 3 per cent.

S&P projected India's GDP growth to be 6.3 per cent in 2025-26 and 6.5 per cent in 2026-27 fiscal year.

● According to S&P, the US economy is expected to grow 1.5 per cent this year and 1.7 per cent in the next.

In March, S&P had lowered the FY'26 GDP growth forecast to 6.5 per cent, from 6.7 per cent.

"The risks to our baseline remain firmly on the downside in the form of a stronger-than-anticipated spillover from the tariff shock to the real economy. The longer-term configuration of the global economy, including the role of the US, is also less certain," S&P said.

With regard to exchange rate fluctuations, S&P projected INR/USD exchange rate to be 88 by 2025-end from 86.64 in 2024. The INR/USD pair is witnessing significant fluctuations since the US tariff announcement and the rupee is currently hovering at 84-level against the greenback.

According to S&P, the US economy is expected to grow 1.5 per cent this year and 1.7 per cent in the next.

Trade relations with the EU are likely to be complex, while Canada looks to take a firm stance on trade talks with the US.

So far, the economic fallout from tariff shock has been limited to drops in confidence indices and declines in nominal variables such as financial asset prices. *—PTI*

Manufacturing sector growth hits 10-month high: PMI

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The growth momentum in India's manufacturing sector strengthened in April, with output expanding at its fastest pace since June 2024, according to the HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI). The PMI rose slightly from 58.1 in March to 58.2 in April, marking the strongest improvement in the sector's health for ten months. A PMI reading above 50 indicates expansion.

The growth was driven by a sharp rise in new business, particularly from international markets. New export orders grew at their fastest rate in over 14 years, with demand from regions such as Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas leading the charge. This surge in export orders suggests a potential shift in global production towards India, influenced by the changing trade landscape and recent US tariff policies.

The strong demand also led to an increase in employment, with 9 per cent of manufacturers hiring additional staff to meet production requirements. Purchasing activity rose in tandem with new business growth, with many manufacturers building up stocks to support future output.

On the price front, manufacturers raised selling prices at the fastest pace since October 2013, driven by robust demand for Indian goods, despite a slight uptick in input costs.

Looking ahead, manufacturers remain optimistic, expecting strong demand to continue. Marketing efforts, efficiency gains, and new client inquiries are expected to support positive output forecasts for the coming year. *—PTI*

India to focus on non-tariff barriers

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

India and the European Union have reaffirmed their commitment to address pending issues regarding their ambitious proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the next round of negotiations scheduled to take place in New Delhi from 12–16 May, an official statement said on Friday,

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and Maros Sefcovic, European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, had met in Brussels and discussed the progress of discussions aimed at navigating global trade challenges and solidifying their resolve to achieve this significant milestone.

During the meeting, India stressed importance of giving equal attention to non-tariff barriers alongside tariff negotiations to ensure meaningful progress. Both sides emphasised the critical need to maintain the current momentum through regular monthly negotiating rounds and continued virtual engagement.

The India-EU FTA aspires to reflect the evolving dynamics of global commerce by actively supporting digital transition and promoting diversified and resilient supply chains. —PTI

IBM, TCS PARTNER AP GOVT TO DELOY INDIA'S LARGEST QUANTUM COMPUTER

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

IBM, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and the government of Andhra Pradesh have partnered to deploy India's largest quantum computer at the Quantum Valley Tech Park in Amaravati.

This initiative is designed to unlock the potential of quantum computing to address industry challenges that are currently beyond the scope of classical computing.

The Quantum Valley Tech Park will house the IBM Quantum System Two, featuring a 156-qubit Heron quantum processor, making it the largest quantum computer in India.

TCS will support the development of algorithms and applications aimed at solving complex problems across sectors such as life sciences, materials science, energy optimisation, and supply chain resilience.

Andhra Pradesh's Chief Minister, N Chandrababu Naidu, highlighted the importance of the project in establishing India as a global leader in quantum technology, supporting innovation and job creation.

The tech park will provide research opportunities, access to quantum computing resources, and foster collaboration between industry and academia. *—PTI*

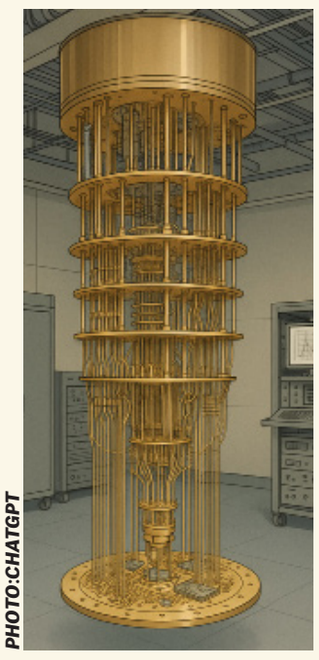


PHOTO:CHATGPT

SAYS APPLE CEO

'Majority of iPhones sold in US will be made in India'

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Apple will source the majority of the iPhone sold in the US from India in the June quarter while China will produce the vast majority of the devices for other markets amid uncertainty over tax tariffs, a top official said on Friday.

During the company's second-quarter earnings call, Apple CEO Tim Cook said the company made quarterly records in several countries, including India.

The company, however, recorded the seventh straight quarter of sales decline in China where it produced the largest volume of iPhones.

"For the June quarter, we do expect the majority of iPhones sold in the US will have India as their country of origin, and Vietnam to be the country of origin for almost all iPad, Mac, Apple Watch, and AirPods products also sold in the US. China would continue to be the country of origin for the vast majority of total product sales outside the US," Cook said.

According to an analysis by S&P Global, Apple's iPhone sales in the US were 75.9 million units in 2024, with exports in March from India equivalent to 3.1 million units in March, suggesting a need to double shipments either through new capacity or redirecting shipments bound for the domestic market.

"Apple's Indian exports already headed predominantly to the United States, which represented 81.9 per cent of phones exported by the firm in the three months to 28 February, 2025. *—PTI*

AMID INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

Sensex climbs 260 pts, Nifty gains 12.50 pts

MUMBAI, 2 MAY

BSE benchmark index Sensex ended 260 points higher on Friday amid optimism surrounding a potential India-US trade deal, record high GST collection in April, and continuous foreign fund inflows.

Moreover, a firm trend in global markets also added to the optimism in equities.

After a sharp rally in intra-day trade the 30-share BSE benchmark gauge later trimmed most of the gains and settled 259.75 points or 0.32 per cent higher at 80,501.99. During the day, the benchmark jumped 935.69 points or 1.16 per cent to 81,177.93.

In a volatile trade, NSE Nifty eked out a marginal gain of 12.50 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 24,346.70.

From the Sensex firms, Adani Ports jumped over 4 per cent after the firm reported a 50 per cent jump in its March quarter net profit and issued a higher year-on-year revenue growth forecast for the current fiscal, citing strong growth in port volumes and a robust rise in the logistics business.

Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank, State Bank of India, Maruti, Tata Motors, ITC, Tata Steel and Reliance Industries were also among the gainers. *—PTI*

Gensol shares dive for 16th straight day

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Shares of crisis-hit Gensol Engineering extended their falling streak to the 16th straight day on Friday, tumbling 5 per cent, to hit a fresh lower circuit limit. The stock declined 4.99 per cent to Rs 74.20 -- its lowest trading permissible limit for the day as also a 52-week low -- on the BSE. Shares of the firm tanked 5 per cent to drop to the lower circuit as well as a 52-week low level of Rs 73.42 at the NSE. This is the 16th straight day of decline for the stock. *– PTI*

Adani shares climb over 3% as Q4 profit jumps

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Shares of Adani Enterprises Ltd climbed over 3 per cent on Friday morning after the firm reported a 7.5-fold jump in its fourth quarter net profit. The company's share price went up by 3.14 per cent to Rs 2,370 on the BSE. At the NSE, the stock rallied 3 per cent to Rs 2,372.40. Adani Enterprises Ltd, the flagship company of the billionaire Gautam Adani's group, on Thursday reported a 7.5-fold jump in its fourth quarter net profit on the back of one-time gain from stake sale in consumer goods venture, and strong growth in solar manufacturing and airports. The profit rise was helped by a Rs 3,286 crore gain made from the sale of stake in Wilmar. After adjusting for one-time gain from Wilmar stake sale, the net profit came at Rs 1,313 crore. *—PTI*

Reliance's Suntech inks 25-yr power pact with SECI

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Reliance Power on Friday said its subsidiary, Reliance NU Suntech Pvt Ltd, has signed a 25-year, long-term power purchase agreement with the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI).

The agreement envisages that Suntech will supply 930MW of solar power integrated with 465MW/1,860MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), at a competitive fixed tariff of Rs 3.53 per kWh.

Suntech is set to develop and commission Asia's largest single-location integrated solar and BESS project within the next 24 months. The project entails a capital investment of up to Rs 10,000 crore, representing a significant strategic commitment to operational scalability and long-term value creation.

To achieve the contracted capacity of 930MW, the project will deploy more than 1,700MWp of installed solar generation capacity.

This strategic agreement represents one of the most significant long-term power offtake arrangements in India to date, marking a major milestone in the nation's transition to clean energy, the statement added.

In December 2024, Suntech secured the largest award in SECI's Tranche XVII auction, winning an allocation of 930 MW of solar power capacity along with a 465 MW/1,860 MWh Battery Energy Storage System.

A 465 MW/1,860 MWh BESS means power back up (supply) of 465 MW for four hours.

The allocation was awarded through a tariff-based competitive bidding process, which saw participation from 5 leading energy companies. *—PTI*

PHOTO:PIXABAY

SC rejects JSW Steel's resolution plan, orders liquidation

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday set aside the resolution plan submitted by JSW Steel for Bhushan Steel and Power Ltd (BSPL), holding it illegal and in violation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

A bench comprising Justice Bela M Trivedi and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma ordered the liquidation of BSPL under IBC.

The top court criticised the conduct of all key stakeholders in the resolution process — the resolution professional, Committee of Creditors (CoC), and National Company Law Tribunal — for enabling what it termed a "flagrant violation" of the IBC.

● The bench said the CoC was found to have approved JSW's resolution plan without proper application of its commercial wisdom.

Justice Bela Trivedi, pronouncing the verdict, said resolution professional failed to perform his statutory duties during the corporate insolvency resolution process, as mandated under IBC and its associated regulations.

The bench said the CoC was found to have approved JSW's resolution plan without proper application of its commercial wisdom.

The plan contravened mandatory IBC provisions and did not protect creditors' interests and notably, the CoC accepted payments from JSW without objection, despite the plan's shortcomings, it added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

England adds Cook, Cox for Zimbabwe Test

LONDON, 2 MAY

England has announced a 13-member squad for the one-off Test against Zimbabwe at Trent Bridge, starting 22 May. Uncapped players Sam Cook and Jordan Cox were included in the squad. This match marks Zimbabwe's first Test on English soil since 2003 and opens England's international summer, which features five home Tests against India beginning 20 June. Medium pacer Cook, 27, has been a standout performer in county cricket, taking 318 first-class wickets at an impressive average of 19.77, and making a mark during the England Lions tour of Australia with 13 wickets in three matches. —*PTI*

Bayern Munich's Eric Dier to leave at season's end

MUNICH, 2 MAY

Bayern Munich announced that English defender Eric Dier will depart at the end of the season as he opts not to renew his contract. Sporting director Christoph Freund confirmed discussions aimed at extending Dier's stay were unsuccessful, stating, "He doesn't want to extend and will leave us." Despite making 45 appearances since his January 2024 transfer from Tottenham, Dier found playing time limited under coach Vincent Kompany. The 31-year-old is reportedly set to join French side Monaco, where he is expected to secure a longer deal and more frequent first-team opportunities. Freund expressed hope that Dier could conclude his Bayern career with the Bundesliga title in their match against Leipzig. —*PTI*

Rayhan Thomas struggles at Tulum Golf Championship

TULUM, 2 MAY

Indian golfer Rayhan Thomas endured a challenging opening round at the Tulum Championship, carding a five-over par 77, placing him in jeopardy of missing the cut. He currently sits tied for 124th position following Thursday's play. In his previous nine tournaments, Thomas has made the cut in four events, achieving a best finish of tied for seventh at the Bahamas Great Abaco Classic. Mitchell Meissner captured the lead with a strong six-under par 66, featuring seven birdies and just one bogey. He has secured three top-10 finishes this season, including a tied seventh at the recent Veritex Bank Championship. Zach Bauchou follows closely in second place at five-under. —*PTI*

Bose, Soumya win AIFF player of the year awards

BHUBANESWAR, 2 MAY

Indian defender Subhasish Bose, captain of Mohun Bagan Super Giant, was awarded the Men's Player of the Year at the AIFF Awards after leading his team in the Indian Super League. Mohun Bagan SG triumphed over Bengaluru FC with a 2-1 victory in the final, marking only the second time in ISL history that a team has achieved this feat, following Mumbai City FC in the 2020-21 season. In the women's category, East Bengal FC striker Soumya Guguloth took home the prestigious honour. Khalid Jamil was recognised as the Men's Coach of the Year for the second consecutive time, while Sujata Kar got the Women's Coach of the Year. Other accolades included Brison Fernandas for Most Promising Men's Player. —*PTI*

RCB eye edge in play-offs; CSK a win

Fans eagerly await to watch a possibly last battle between Kolhi and Dhoni

BENGALURU, 2 MAY

While Royal Challengers Bengaluru have a provisional playoff berth in sight, Chennai Super Kings need a morale-lifting win. But beyond the team goals, the IPL match at Chinnaswamy Stadium on Saturday offers the opportunity to see icons Virat Kohli and MS Dhoni battling against each other, perhaps for the final time.

RCB can swell their tally to 16 points with a win, a position from where they potentially cannot falter in the race to the Qualifiers with three matches still remaining. Meanwhile, a victory will instil some belief into an already ousted CSK unit that it could finish somewhere mid-table. Fan favourites Dhoni and Kolhi will be going at full tilt against each other. Kohli has constructed a mini hot streak, making four fifties in his last five innings and pushing for Orange Cap with 443 runs.

The champion batter will be eager to produce another masterclass to help RCB get closer to the play-off berth. With Devdutt No. 3 making two fifties in his last two innings, Kohli has got ample support.

But RCB will be keen to see skipper Rajat Patidar regain his smooth-hitting form, as his last substantial innings came seven matches ago.

However, he can look to cash in on the under-firing CSK bowling unit, barring pacer Khaleel Ahmed and spinner Noor Ahmad.

The Super Kings batters will have no respite against Josh Hazlewood, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Krunal Pandya and Suyash Sharma.

—*PTI*

KCA suspends Sreesanth for 3 years

T'puram, 2 May

The Kerala Cricket Association (KCA) has suspended former India pacer S Sreesanth for three years for allegedly making false and derogatory statements against it in connection with the controversy surrounding Sanju Samson's omission from the Indian team for the Champions Trophy.

In a statement, the KCA said the decision was taken at its special General Body meeting held in Kochi on 30 April. Sreesanth's remarks came amid criticism of the KCA for dropping Samson for the Vijay Hazare Trophy, which was believed to have affected his chances of being selected for the Champions Trophy.

Sreesanth is currently a co-owner of Kollam Aeries, a franchise team in the Kerala Cricket League. —*PTI*

CSK VS RCB

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	33
CSK Won:	21
RCB Won:	12

CSK VS RCB Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

Chelsea bags 4–1 win in UEFA CL semis

LONDON, 2 MAY

Chelsea took a big step toward advancing to the UEFA Conference League final by beating Swedish club Djurgården 4-1 in the first leg of their semifinal on Thursday.

Nicolas Jackson struck twice six minutes apart in the second half after Jadon Sancho and Noni Madueke netted in the first half for Chelsea to take control ahead of the second leg next Thursday at Stamford Bridge.

"We're very happy that we won. That's the most important," Jackson told TNT Sports. "It is one step forward and we hope to reach the final."

Chelsea was a big favorite against the Swedish team that has reached a European semifinal for the first time and proved that status at the Stockholm Arena.

Enzo Fernández sent a precise floating cross from the right for unmarked Sancho to give Chelsea a 1-0 lead in the 13rd minute. Madueke doubled the advantage two minutes before halftime, with Fernández again providing the final pass.

Jackson only needed to score into an empty net after a defensive blunder in the 59th for his first before hitting the roof of the net from the edge of the area to make it 4-0.

Isak Alemayehu scored a consolation goal for the hosts. —*PTI*

Nicolas Jackson struck twice six minutes apart in the second half after Jadon Sancho and Noni Madueke netted in the first half PHOTO: X

TOTTENHAM, MAN U, LEAD IN EUROPA SEMIS

MANCHESTER, 2 MAY

The rescue act is on for Manchester United and Tottenham. Big wins for both teams in the first legs of the Europa League semifinals on Thursday kept alive their hopes of lifting a major trophy and qualifying for the Champions League.

United beat Athletic Bilbao 3-0 at the San Mames in Spain and Tottenham won 3-1 at home against Norwegian club Bodo/Glimt.

Both Manchester United and Spurs have endured miserable domestic campaigns and are languishing in the bottom half of the Premier League. But European club soccer's second-tier Europa League could yet see one of them salvage their season.

Not only is silverware on the line, but so is an unlikely route to the lucrative Champions League as the prize for winning the competition.

The second leg is at Old Trafford next Thursday and United is potentially just 90 minutes away from returning to Bilbao, which is staging the final on 21 May. —*PTI*

Goa, Jamshedpur eye ticket to AFC

BHUBANESWAR, 2 MAY

FC Goa will aim to become the first team to win the Super Cup twice while Jamshedpur FC will target a historic maiden title when the two sides clash in the final of the ongoing edition here on Saturday.

The winners of the final will also secure qualification to the 2025–26 AFC Champions League Two Preliminary round, adding significant motivation to the contest at the Kalinga Stadium.

Former champions FC Goa, who lifted the title in 2019, are looking to end a four-year absence from the continental football.

Their only appearance in Asia came in the 2021 AFC Champions League group stage.

Jamshedpur FC, on the other hand, have entered uncharted territory. This is their first-ever appearance in a tournament final in their eight-year history, having previously fallen at the semi-final stage in the Super Cup twice. —*PTI*

BLACK DESERT C'SHIP

Jutanugarn, Ryu make solid start on LPGA

Ryu Hae-ran of South Korea reacts after completing a nine-under par round for the first-round lead in the LPGA Black Desert Championship on Thursday PHOTO: X

IVINS, 2 MAY

Haeran Ryu and Ariya Jutanugarn did not waste time moving on from the disappointment of the first LPGA major behind them, both opening with bogey-free rounds on Thursday for an ideal start in the inaugural Black Desert Championship.

Ryu missed only one fairway, one green and took 27 putts in her round of 9-under 63, giving her a one-shot lead over Jutanugarn and Wei-Ling Hsu in the LPGA's return to Utah for the first time in just over 60 years.

Ryu shared the 54-hole lead last week in the Chevron Championship when nothing went right for her the final round.

"Last week, it was tough golf course and this week it's tough, too," Ryu said.

Jutanugarn had a rougher finish. She needed par on the last hole to win when the Thai stubbed a chip behind the green and wound up making bogey. In the five-player playoff, Jutanugarn lipped out on a 7-foot birdie putt as Mao Saigo won. "Jutanugarn said, "Last week I didn't finish the way I want, but it's so many thing going on, and I just want to carry on from that and keep working as hard as I can."

Meanwhile, Aditi Ashok overcame an early bogey to make a strong start that placed her tied 29th on the opening day. She shot three-under 69 on Thursday. —*PTI*

INDIA EYE POSITIVE END TO AUS TOUR

PERTH, 2 MAY

Having endured three consecutive defeats, India will look to turn the tide by trying out new strategies when they clash with hosts Australia again in their fourth match of the five-game series in Perth on Saturday.

The visitors, led by Salima Tete, had lost 3-5 and 2-3 to Australia-A in the first two matches of the exposure trip before going down 0-2 to Australia at the Perth Hockey Stadium on Thursday.

With one eye on the World Cup scheduled for next year and the Hockey Pro League in Europe next month, the tour Down Under is the best opportunity for India to streamline their technique and tactics. But, unfortunately, they haven't met with success so far.

India gave a spirited performance against Australia's senior team but it wasn't enough as Australia broke through the visitors' defence. —*PTI*

Gauff routs Swiatek to reach Madrid Open final

MADRID, 2 MAY

Coco Gauff overpowered defending champion Iga Swiatek 6-1, 6-1 to reach the Madrid Open singles final for the first time on Thursday.

Gauff broke Swiatek's serve three times in the first set and twice in the second to cruise to a 64-minute semifinal victory over the second-ranked Swiatek at the clay-court tournament.

"The mentality that I had in the whole match was aggressive," the fourth-ranked Gauff said. "Maybe it wasn't her best level today, but I think I forced her into some awkward positions."

Swiatek had recovered from losing the first set 0-6 to Madison Keys on Wednesday.

Gauff will face either top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka or Elina Svitolina in the final.

In the men's quarterfinals, Casper Ruud advanced by defeating Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 7-5 to become the first player born in 1990 or later to reach 30 tour-level semifinals on clay.

"I looked at our stats last night and saw he beat me on grass, outdoor hard and indoor hard. The last surface was clay so I thought, please don't make it 4-0,'" Ruud said. "I tried to use the surface to my advantage." —*PTI*

United States' Coco Gauff shakes hands with Iga Swiatek of Poland at the end of their match during the Madrid Open tennis tournament in Madrid on Thursday PHOTO: X @sportstarweb

AFTER SC RULING

England bans transgenders from women's cricket, football

LONDON, 2 MAY

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Friday banned transgender women from competing in women's and girls' matches with immediate effect, complying with a recent Supreme Court ruling that excludes them from the legal definition of women.

The ECB's decision came less than 24 hours after the Football Association (FA) took a similar resolution.

"With immediate effect, only those whose biological sex is female will be eligible to play in women's cricket and girls' cricket matches. Transgender women and girls can continue playing in open and mixed cricket," the ECB statement said.

The ECB said while it was all for inclusivity in sports, the Supreme Court decision prompted it to formulate new rules for women's and girls' cricket.

"Our regulations for recreational cricket have always aimed at ensuring that cricket remains as inclusive a sport as possible. These included measures to manage disparities, irrespective of someone's gender, and safeguard the enjoyment of all players. However, given the new advice received about the impact of the Supreme Court ruling, we believe the changes announced today are necessary."

The English Football Association (FA) had on Thursday similarly announced that transgender women would no longer be able to compete in women's football in England from 1 June.

The Football Association said it decided to change its rules that previously allowed transgender athletes to play in women's soccer if they had reduced testosterone levels. The Scottish Football Association made a similar decision. —*PTI*